

Maxims of Politeness on Arthur's Final Goodbye to John from Red Dead Redemption 2

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Abstract. The point of this research is to identify and analyze how Arthur's utterances in *Red Dead Redemption 2* promote politeness maxims, developing deep emotional bonds. This emphasizes language's role in enhancing social harmony – a significant aspect of inclusivity in the digital era. Focusing on the significance of building inclusive and sustainable community, this research highlights how Leech's politeness maxims maintain their impact in fostering social harmony. Applying a descriptive qualitative method, this research involved extracting and categorizing utterances based on Leech's politeness maxims, analyzing their frequency and contextual significance. The findings demonstrate that Arthur's choice of utterances cultivates emotional bonds in his interaction with John. These utterances successfully minimize conflict and maximizing goodwill. Politeness Maxims enhance emotional engagement and contribute to a more immersive narrative experience. Furthermore, they play a crucial role in deepening character relationships and emotional authenticity in video game storytelling – enhancing socially engaging experiences.

Keywords: Leech's Politeness maxim, language role in digital era, Red Dead Redemption 2

1. Introduction

Lorem ipsum In the digital era, effective and respectful communication promotes an inclusive and sustainable community. Choice of utterances strengthens emotional bonds and maintains social harmony both online and offline (Mukhtorova, 2024:303). In online communication, cultural diversity often leads to miscommunication (Varhelahti & Turnquist, 2021:201), highlighting the importance of politeness in building a respectful interaction. To simulate real-life interactions and serve as a medium for studying digital communication, politeness, and inclusivity, Arthur's final *goodbye* to John in *Red Dead Redemption 2* – a narrative-driven video game – is arguably designed to develop emotional bonds while promoting politeness. As a digital innovation, video games reflect common social interaction and model the evolution of today communication (Khan, 2025:9).

Politeness is a crucial aspect of linguistics that ensures effective and respectful communication interaction. Previous research studies have shown the ways in which

politeness strategies impact interpersonal interaction in various contexts. The study on politeness methods by Brown and Levinson (1987), for example, focused on face-threatening behaviors and the way in which people use mitigation techniques to preserve social harmony. This research concluded that politeness is a universal aspect of human interaction, though its cultural differences. Similarly, Holmes (1995) investigated how politeness varies by gender and discovered that women typically employ more constructive politeness techniques, which promote unity in society and inclusivity. These studies support the theory that politeness is crucial for preserving harmony and avoiding conflict in communication. This concept extends to fictional narratives, including those in video games. However, alongside technological development and innovation, language usage evolves to some extent. Boloh & Veszelszki (2020:68) claims that linguistic behaviors change gradually. Violations of politeness maxims serve as a basic strategy for designing character-specific insults. Game developers create and use utterances to present social and cooperative gameplay style where the heroes are created with distinct qualities.

As implied, heroes' qualities completely influence choice of utterances. In this perspective, players have a choice to decide the plot, shaping character personalities, relationships, and psychological development. The game conversation shows how characters' relationship can change over time and impact the development of character. Characters' attention and respect from one to another are influenced by politeness maxims that are added into game dialogue. This is specifically important in emotional moments such as farewell where linguistic choices affect the narrative. The use of politeness strategies can reduce emotional pressure and convince them that separation is shown as a crucial and meaningful transition rather than a cause of conflict in video games where characters separate away.

The study of politeness in video games dialogue offers the new field in pragmatic and discourse analysis. Most of the politeness researches focus on literature, movies, or real-world communication, but interactive narrative like RDR2 suggests fresh analytical opportunities in pragmatic field. Different from passive storytelling, video games need player's participation, which can make the dialogue feel more personal and impactful. Adopting the case study on how politeness maxims affect emotionally in Arthur's farewell conversation with John, Leech's politeness framework is applied. This study explores how Arthur uses politeness strategies to control, instruct, and encourage John, despite his tragic situation. Highlighted politeness strategies for managing these conflicts, this research proposes that politeness maxims can potentially reduce emotional tension. These maxims facilitate a transition to prevent potential conflicts when characters conclude conversations. In this context, farewell expression – such as *goodbye* – is serve as turning point for characters, signifying personal growth, sacrifice, or the reinforcement of relationships. Focusing on Arthur's farewell *goodbye*, this research explores his emotions and intentions during a series of farewell interactions with John, a fellow gang member whom Arthur considers a brother. These interactions present both emotional tensions and intended utterances that convey politeness values. Using a descriptive qualitative method, this research examines politeness principles by analyzing Arthur's *goodbye* expressions and the associated emotional nuances.

2. Literature Review

As suggested, characters' interactions in video games depict not only emotional tension but also language style. In previous era, video games had least narrative elements, but lately video game developers improve the narrative of the games. They make the character and the story

more complex. Along with the development of Full Motion Video (FMV) games, storytelling becomes more creative adding video clips where player's actions are completely affected to the plot. In narrative-based games, players also have a choice to decide the plot. This improvement reflects the importance of narrative in gaming, where dialogue has a crucial role in shaping character personalities, relationships, and psychological development. Video games make players' choices be recognized and honored in the storyline, from an efficient and fair perspective (Budiarta et. all, 2024:1). The games conversation shows how characters relationship can change over time and impact the development of character. Characters' attention and respect from one to another are influenced by politeness maxims that are added into game dialogue. This is specifically important in emotional moments such as farewell where linguistic choices affect the narrative. Generally, the use of politeness strategies can reduce emotional tension (Anugrawati & Syam, 2024:293). In this context, the evolution of video game narratives shows how language plays a crucial role in the creation of exciting and immersive experiences. Game developers can produce more realistic and emotional dialogues and strengthen the bonds between character and players with Leech's politeness maxims. Eventually politeness in digital narratives not only improves the story telling but also the larger idea of societal harmony by confirming that communication remains respectful, inclusive, and meaningful in life.

In pragmatic perspectives, Leech (1983) proposed a model to examine politeness. Leech introduced politeness maxims to explain how speakers maintain social harmony by expressing consideration and respect in conversation. These maxims – tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy – serve as a model to encourage positive relationship and accommodate smooth communication (Leech, 1983). They emphasize minimizing imposition, enhancing the listener's face, and fostering cooperation in discourse. These maxims provide speakers with a guideline that helps maintain social harmony and reduce action that might compromise their credibility. The face theory, put forth by Brown and Levinson (1987), which categorize politeness (building solidarity) and negative politeness (showing difference). These theories offer crucial resources for examining the ways in which politeness is expressed in fictional discourse, such as dialogue in video games. Culpeper (2011:34) suggested that impoliteness and politeness in fictional dialogue function to shape character identities and interpersonal relationships. Similarly, Dynel (2011:2273) contends that video games, as an interactive fiction, offer a special environment in which pragmatic rules can improve emotional involvement.

Particular research on dialogue of video games, indicates that character's speech is both adapted to fit dramatic storytelling and reflect linguistic convention in the real world. According to Gee (2003:20), video games are narrative tools that promote player immersion through the dialogue, so the player's interpretation of the story is greatly influenced by the language that is used. In the case of *Red Dead Redemption 2*, Arthur final conversation with John Marston is an example of how politeness techniques support emotional narrative and strengthen Arthur's role as a brother.

While previous study on pragmatics in video games has explored the general aspect of character and player interaction, little attention has been shown to the precise role that politeness maxims play in forming narrative depth. By using Leech's maxim to close that gap by bringing a spotlight on how civility improves character relationship and adds to the general plot structure of the game. Unlike previous study, this research bridges pragmatic and video

game narrative, show how linguistic implied in games and show important choices in scripted dialogue in storytelling, player engagement and emotional resonance.

3. Methodology

This research analyses how politeness maxims are used in Arthur's farewell goodbye to John using a descriptive qualitative method. The method allows an in-depth review of the linguistic elements employed in fictional dialogue and how they contribute to meaning, character development, and emotional impact. It is especially well-suited for this research. With this method, the politeness can be implied in how to understand the meaning of the dialogue.

Red Dead Redemption 2 (RDR2) developed by Rockstar Games, is a best example of a game that uses dialogue to build emotion and interaction with the players, because the Non-Playable Character (NPC) has their own personality and can be developed. The game setting is in 19th century, the game follows Arthur as an outlaw struggling with loyalty, morality, and redemption. One of the most memorable moments to analyze is the moment when Arthur expressed his farewell *goodbye* to John, a fellow gang member whom Arthur considered as a brother. While he nearly encountered the death due to tuberculosis and betrayal, this moment was not only emotionally powerful but had a lot of pragmatic elements, especially politeness strategies that reflect Arthur's care to John's future.

The data for this research are from *Red Dead Redemption 2* (2018), especially the final conversation between Arthur and John when the gang is just destroyed in final chapter of the game (chapter 6 "Red Dead Redemption"). The script was written out exactly like dialogue in the game. The dialogue was recaptured from recorded gameplay and officially script sources. To offer detailed pragmatic insights, the analysis also measured non-verbal clues like tone, pauses, and gestures.

The analysis uses Leech's (1983) politeness maxims. Each utterance was categorized based on these maxims. Tact Maxims focuses on maximizing the benefit of the other and minimizing imposition. Generosity Maxim highlights in minimizing benefit to one while maximizing to others. Then Approbation Maxim aims to minimize dispraise and maximize praise of others, and Modesty Maxim encourages minimizing self-praise while maximizing self-dispraise. Also, the sympathy Maxim emphasizes the value of understanding as assisting others, while the Agreement Maxim aims to minimize the disagreement and maximize the agreement.

By using these maxims, the study explores how politeness strategies can shape the emotional impact of Arthur Morgans's dialogue. A complex interpretation of his last explanations was made by the methodological analysis of each utterance to identify the maxim or maxims that applied. This framework presents a structured method to understand how politeness is used to gain social harmony and carry deep emotional meaning in conversation in games or in real-life.

The analysis began with transcript and breakdown, where the dialogue was broken down into some units based on conversational turns. Each segment was implied according to the politeness maxim it followed to, with a primary maxim is identified when multiple maxims were present. This categorization helped to reveal the underlying politeness strategies used in Arthur's speech.

A contextual analysis was carried out after the enciphering process to see how Arthur's utterance and narrative impact. This progress made it easier to understand why he used politeness techniques and how they added the meaning of the overall conversation. Finally,

the results were compared with other general narrative components. It shows how Arthur's growth as a person and his role as John's brother. Using this methodological style, the study offers a detailed comprehension of how Arthur uses politeness maxim in his farewell interpretations to make a moving and emotionally impactful farewell.

4. Findings and Discussion

The analysis of Arthur farewell goodbye with John in *Red Dead Redemption 2* shows the strategic application of many politeness maxims. All of them convey the emotional depth and narrative impact of the scene. By analyzing how Arthur's dialogue aligns with Leech's framework of politeness, this study gain insight into the subtle ways how language is used to manage interpersonal relationships within the characters, minimize emotional tension, and improve character dynamic. The politeness maxims such as tact, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy are all included thoughtfully to ensure that Arthur's farewell gain respectful, emotionally supportive, and focused on the John future. Table 1 demonstrate the emotional nuances.

Table 1. Categorization of Politeness Maxims of Arthur's Final Goodbye

Politeness Maxim	Arthur's Dialogue	Emotional Purpose	Effect on John Marston
Tact	"You go."	Minimizes emotional strain, removes guilt	John feels it's his decision to leave without hesitation or guilt
Approbation	"You better."	Encourages positive reinforcement, reduces guilt	John feels motivated and less guilty about leaving
Modesty	"I think I've pushed all I can."	Downplays his suffering, avoids focus on his heroism	John doesn't see Arthur as a tragic figure and is able to move on
Agreement	"Go. Now."	Confirms mutual understanding and decisions	John is assured that leaving is the right course of action
Sympathy	"You better." (Final remark)	Shows empathy, ensures John's emotional freedom	John's emotional burden is lightened, allowing him to leave without feeling conflicted

Each maxim has a special purpose emotionally. To make sure that Arthur's remarks do not execute further guilt or duty on John. for example, the Tact maxim is in use to reduce any emotional strain on him. Similar to Tact maxim, the maxim approbation maxim emphasizes making as maximally positive remarks as possible while minimizing negative remarks. This allows Arthur to bring attention to John's benefits and the good things about their relationship. That is supported by the Modesty maxim, which Emphasize John's strength while ignoring Arthur's personal struggle and sacrifice in the background. In the interim, the Agreement Maxim is key for confirming that both speakers understand and accept each other's decisions. Lastly, the sympathy maxim ensures that Arthur shows empathy for John's emotional condition and shows in depth understanding of how difficult the farewell is. Arthur's

discourse eliminates face-menacing behaviors while all together encouraging a sense of closure, mutual respect, and emotional connection between the two characters when using these maxims. This analysis shows how language decisions are important and can influence character interaction. Also, emotional resonance in video games narrative (Shown in Figure 1).



Figure 1. Arthur's final goodbye

John Marston : *"come on Arthur! Let's go!"*
Arthur Morgan : *"You go."*
John : *"keep pushing Arthur!"*
Arthur : *"no.... no... I think I've pushed all I can."*

In this dialogue, Arthur takes this by moving the focus of the discussion from his personal struggle to John life. Arthur eliminates any change of debate by declaring, "You go." Which makes John's choice straightforward and quick. John doesn't question himself because the phrase is short, clear, and unhesitating. John might have stayed behind, risking both of them, if Arthur had begged or spoken confusion.

Moreover, Arthur's language reduces the intensity of his condition. He says, "I think I've pushed all I can." Without making a dramatic statement that he is unable to continue his journey. This phrase gives his statement a more realistic and less tragic feel, as though his body has reached its limit on its own without the help of internal factors. Because Arthur shows John's problem as a straightforward reality rather than personal failure, this tactful approach makes that John won't feel bad about leaving Arthur.

Arthur language also ensures that John benefits emotionally from his words. John is able to depart without hesitation or regret because Arthur makes his decision seems like the right one.

John internal struggle is reducing thoughtful speech, which increase his capacity to concentrate on his escape than Arthur's fate. In these ways, Arthur follows the Tact Maxim perfectly, sacrificing his on comfort by putting John's comfort.

John Marston : " We ain't both gonna make it."

Arthur Morgan : " Go. Now. I'll hold them off."

To achieve Generosity Maxim, Arthur put John's survival above everything else, utterly ignoring his own suffering. John can't try to argue with him otherwise because is words make it apparent that he has already accepted his fate. Arthur declares "Go. Now." Ruling out the possibility of remaining together and ensuring John's departure. Arthur choices word demonstrate that John does not believe he is leaving him. If Arthur said, "I can make it" or "I have to stay", it would make him show his weakness and increased feeling guilty of John. Instead, Arthur said "I'll hold the off" reframes his choice as an active one. This gives the impression that he is staying behind because it is the best option, not because he no longer has an option. This change in perspective is essential because it lessens John emotional burden by enabling him to see Arthur as a protector rather than a victim.

Furthermore, Arthur's selfness reinforces the bond of royalty between the two men. By ensuring John does not carry the guilt of his death, Arthur leaves him with strength rather than a sorrow. He satisfies the Generosity Maxim by putting John's safety above his own, even if it means sacrifice his life to ensure John's future.

John Marston : " Alright, Arthur. I'm coming back for you!"

Arthur Morgan : " You better."

Arthur never makes John feel bad about leaving or putting the blame on him for doing so. Instead, he responds, "you better" making John's statement a challenge. Although this phrase seems amusing it has a significant emotional meaning and makes sure John doesn't feel like a coward when he leaves.

Arthur word choices is carefully planes, rather than saying "don't come back," which could give John the impression that he is leaving him, he lets john maintain hope while making sure he departs. John might have been driven to ignore Arthur out of loyalty if he had instructed him not to go back. By responding in a way uplifting John without making him feel bad, Arthur keeps the spirit of their brotherhood.

Arthur's tone also stays firm and unwavering, supporting the notion that he is dying with a purpose rather than in despair. John mental strength is maintained in this instance, preventing him from experiencing overwhelming sadness. By reducing John's anxiety and increasing his determination, Arthur successfully applies the Approbation Maxim once more.

Arthur never makes himself the center of attention or raises his sacrifice in order to uphold the Modesty Maxim. In order to prevent John from viewing Arthur as a tragic figure but rather as a man who accepts his fate with dignity, Arthur minimizes his heroism throughout their conversation. Arthur shows his difficult situation as a logical conclusion rather than a martyrdom when he states, "I think I've pushed all I can" this keeps John from being overtaken

by grief or considering Arthur's passing to be a terrible loss. Rather, it supports the notion that Arthur is basically coming to the end of his journey, which makes it simpler for John to accept and move forward.

Arthur also never looks for approval of his choice. He does not ask John to remember him as a hero, nor does demand gratitude or acknowledgement for his action. John have been emotionally burdened and found it more difficult to let go if Arthur said something like, "tell jack about me" (jack is John's son) or "remember what I did to you" rather, by keeping quiet about his own sacrifice, Arthur free John from burden of carrying on his legacy. Arthur's last moment will be about John's survival than his own reputation because of this act of humility.

Additionally, Arthur avoids drowning in his misery. Despite having every reason to do so, he chooses not to focus on his pain, his regrets, or his wounds. The idea that John must move forward without looking back is reinforced by Arthur's emotional control, which spares John from having to console him. This subtle yet powerful use of modesty Maxim ensures that Arthur's goodbye is dignified and selfless, rather than sorrowful and dramatic.

Arthur ensures that John does not argue or resist leaving by using direct and decisive language. According to the Agreement Maxim, speakers should steer clear of pointless conflict, and Arthur does this any removing any chance for discussion. Arthur strongly says, "You go," as opposed to, "I don't think I can't make it" which might encourage John to insist otherwise. John is unable to negotiate because of the straightforward and conciseness of his statements, which makes it obvious that staying behind is not an option.

Arthur also gently confirms John intuitions rather than challenging them. When John says, "we ain't both gonna make it" Arthur does not deny the reality of the situation or attempt to argue for another solution. Instead, by saying, "go. Now. I'll hold them off" he instantly confirms John's comprehension. This moment is crucial because John might have attempted to defend Arthur or instead on finding different ways to save both of them if he doesn't show hesitation. John's moral reluctance to leave is eliminated when Arthur makes sure they are in complete agreement.

In addition, Arthur final response "you better" to John pledge to come back is a challenge disguised as an agreement. By putting it in this way, Arthur accepts John's feelings without completely dismissing them. John might have felt conflicted or guilty if he had said, "No, don't come back." However, Arthur makes sure that John doesn't feel betrayed by his decisions to go by using a lighthearted yet serious tone. John's resolve is strengthened by this nuance implementation of the Agreement Maxim, which enables him to leave without feeling hesitant.

Arthur's entire farewell is structured around the Sympathy Maxim, as he does everything in his power to reduce John's emotional pain. Arthur never shows regret, anger, or resentment toward John or anyone else, despite the fact that he is dying, worn out, and betrayed. He doesn't blame Duct, Micah, or even himself about what happened to him. What He only worried is ensuring that John leave and lives a better life. By controlling his emotions, Arthur keeps John from experiencing feeling grief or guilt, make him to focus on his future.

One of the most important aspects of Arthur's final words is his rejection to express fear or despair. John would have been stunned with guilt if Arthur had cried or pleaded for help. Rather, Arthur maintains his calmness, allowing John emotional freedom to leave him without guilt. Arthur choice word that can make John does not bear the emotional scars of being abandoned, so he making his death seem more like a natural sacrifice than tragedy. Arthur's

rational decision, which minimizes negative feelings and maximizes faith, is in perfect harmony with the Sympathy Maxim.

The final act of emotional bonding between the two brother is when Arthur's said his final remark "You better." Arthur keeps away, making the conversation too sentimental or tragic, even though it is his final moments. Instead, he declares their relationship by using a positive yet lighthearted word that confirms that their brotherhood will continue beyond this instance. This confirms that John now has a courage rather than sadness, explaining how Arthur's implementation of the Sympathy Maxim influences the complete farewell.

5. Conclusion

The good and powerful example for a use of politeness maxim in narrative discourse is Arthur's final goodbye in Red Dead Redemption 2. In this game's narrative Arthur Morgan's final words to John are more important than a simple goodbye. That is a statement of loyalty, sacrifice, and unspoken brotherhood. Using Leech's framework for politeness, this analysis shows Arthur purpose to minimize face threatening action, strengthened their brotherhood, and support John emotionally with a construct of politeness maxim. To maximize Agreement, sympathy, and approbation, the other three important politeness maxims. Arthur carefully avoids doing criticizing John during their farewell, instead emphasizing, praising, empathy, and shared understanding for each other. By doing that, Arthur's words not only provide emotional comfort but also preserve the self-respect of both characters during a moment of deep emotional solace. This study underlines the importance of language choices in video game narrative, showing good dialogue can improve character development and increase player emotional involvement. Every word that is said in the game for the player's emotional experience and feelings of connection to the characters. The scenes of Arthur final goodbye take emotional interests and raised by the usage of politeness technique situation, making it an emotional moment that players find quite painful. Future research could widen this topic by analyzing how politeness maxims in various video games plots and how other characters speech technique to deal with interpersonal and emotional situations. A more thorough understanding of how linguistic choices is really important in narrative experience and have a great affect, that also could be demonstrate by a more research in Red Dead Redemption 2 Game. Additionally, researching how the strategies function in different kinds of game or genre may help clarify the role of pragmatic in interactive storytelling and how its influence player emotional and immersion. Future research can be expanding the analysis of politeness maxims across various video games and genre to understand their impact on character devolvement, player immuration, and emotional engagement. This could inform better story telling technique, improve interactive narrative, and deepening understanding of language's role in gaming experience.

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